

WINING AND DINING AUSTRIAN STYLE

A wine tasting launches the alpine country's upcoming gourmet event at the Mandarin Oriental

MANOTE TRIPATHI
THE NATION

In the world of wine, Austria is best known for its white grape varietal called Gruner Veltliner. Yet, while they rarely appear on the shelves of Bangkok's wine merchants, the country also produces a world-class Riesling and other sweet wines that make ideal partners to its fine dining heritage.

So it came as a surprise and a pleasure to discover the very best of Austrian wines here in Bangkok. The occasion was "Imperial Austria Meets Oriental Bangkok - A Culinary Liaison", a wine tasting hosted by the Austrian embassy at the Austrian envoy's residence on Sathorn Soi 1 to introduce the upcoming Austrian food promotion at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel. The



MARIA THERESIA Pirk with the wife of the Austrian ambassador.



DR SALOMON with Ganser.

event, which runs from March 1 to 31, is a collaboration between the Mandarin Oriental and the Romantik Hotel Goldener Stern in Gmund, Waldviertel region.

The promotion will present an exclusive Austrian menu created by the hotel's Chef Siegfried Klein showcasing Austria's culinary artistry. A selection of Austrian wines supplied by Fin led by Jan Ganser will be served throughout the promotion.

Fin brought together a huge selection of Austria's top-quality wines for tasting by a group of news media accompanied by delicious canapes. During the evening, we sampled no fewer than 20 different bottles of wonderful Austrian wines, which were structured to reflect the selection's progression from mild to strong, fresh to sweet. All this in the presence of Dr Berthold Salomon, one of Austria's most respected and revered winemakers, whose family has been making wines in Kremstal since 1792.

The evening began with a welcome from Austrian ambassador Johannes Peterlik, who spoke about imperial Austrian cuisine and the best wines from his country. This was followed by a brief presentation from Maria Theresia Pirk, the manager of the Romantik Hotel Goldener Stern, Austria, and an introductory note by Jan Ganser of Fin.

The tasting started with four Gruner Veltliner wines from different wineries. The first was a 2009 Kremstal DAC Widen & Berg Salomon Undhof, which exuding a floral bouquet with notes of hazelnut and blossom honey.

My favourite was the fourth, the 2009 Gruner Veltliner DAC Reserve



MEDIA MEMBERS settle in for an imperial Austrian wine tasting.

XTRAVAGANCE



AUSTRIAN AMBASSADOR Johannes Peterlik, centre, back row, with his wife, third from left, is flanked by left, Jan Ganser of FIN; Oliver Schnatz, the F&B executive assistant manager, Mandarin Oriental, Bangkok; Benchawan Wisootsat of Fin; Dr Berthold Salomon, and Maria Theresia Pirk of the Romantik Hotel Goldener Stern, Austria.



BENCHAWAN introduces her wines.



THE AUSTRIAN ambassador introduces Maria Theresia Pirk.

Spiegel, Fred Loimer, which was complex with peach, smoke, lentil and citrus notes.

The next four wines were the Riesling with hints of petrol. The 2009 Riesling DAC Undhof Kogl, Salomon, has lime and tangerine aromas with a juicy, spicy and citric palate, while the second - 2009 Riesling DAC Reserve Terrassen, Fred Loimer, was crisp and spicy, with crunchy apple and citrus flavours.

Two pinot noir wines were next in line. The first, from Fred Loimer, had fine creamy bouquet with elegant tannins, while the second, a 2007 Dechant, full of character, with aromas of dark forest berries.

I skipped the remaining red wines, opting to taste instead the top five sweet wines, which were the favourites of the evening. The

2008 Traminer Noble Reserve, Salomon Undhof was sweet and smooth with aromas of yellow roses and lychee.

Next came the 2006 Riesling Undhof Auslese Qba, Salomon Undhof. A light wine to serve with or in place of dessert, it had clear bouquet of peach, pineapple and passion fruit and a mineral finish.

Sweeter than the last one was the 2008 Auslese Cuvee. The lightest of Kracher's dessert wines, this almost syrupy wine had golden yellow colour with fruity aromas.

Sweeter still was the 2009 Riesling Trockenbeerenauslese, Fred Loimer, exhibiting abundant flavours of ripe peaches, honey and a whole box of spices, with super-concentrated body, sweetness and acidity.

The last of the evening was the most expensive, the 2002 Scheurebe

"Zwischen den Seen" TBA No 5. Looking like honey, it had aromas of grapefruit, peppermint and, of course, honey. The feel was syrupy and sharp.

» BOTTOMS UP

The Austrian Food Promotion runs from March 1 to 31 at The Verandah at the Mandarin Oriental.

Austrian desserts and coffee will be served at the Mandarin Oriental, Bangkok's Authors' Lounge and Lobby as well as at L'Espace at Siam Paragon, Salon at the Emporium and Mandarin Oriental Shops.

Call (02) 659 9000 extension 7302.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE MANDARIN ORIENTAL